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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Consumer Price Information/Notes on Inns, Cafes, Restaurants, Barbers

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1. "My knowledge of conditions in Gdansk dates to Oct 53.
2. Consumer Prices
"Following is a list of current prices (in zloty) for certain consumer goods in Gdansk, as of late Sept 53, compared to the prices (in kronas) for the same items in Sweden, early Jan 54:

Item	Price in Sweden (kronas)	Price in Poland (Zloty)	
Men's overcoat of gabardine	190:-	2000-2500	in short supply
Sporting jacket (mocka)	56:-	300-400	very short
Trousers	42:-	600-700	100 per cent wool
Bag (walizka)	40:-	300	
Slippers (leather)	45:-	300	
Socks (nylon)	4:50	30	pure nylon
Socks (wool), thick	6:50	50	
Drawers (cotton)		80	
Shirt (poplin)	25-45	260	
Tie (silk)	9 :-	60	
Beret	5:-	70	unobtainable
Scarf (wool)		100-180	
Workman's shirt	7:75	70-120	
Overall	24:-	250	
Belt (leather)	4-12	50	

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- 2 -
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Item	Price in Sweden (kronas)	Price in Poland (zloty)	
Pajamas	20	120-160	
Sleeping bag	150	1200	
Spirit-stove			unobtainable
Razor blades ('Gerlach')		1 zl. apiece	
Shaving brush	2:-	20	
Ski boots	50	750-1200	
Skis (only the boards)	30	270	
Ski harness	20	120	
Fat (smalec)	3:80	40	
Chocolate, 125 gram cake	0:80-1:-	15	
Dark ale, 0.5 liter	0:84	2:20	
Light ale, 0.5 liter	0:84	2	
Porter, 0.3 liter		3	
Fruit wine	6-16	13-50	
Vodka, 1 liter	16:10	60	
'Colored' vodka, 1 liter	not available in Sweden	80-140	
Pure alcohol, 1 liter	a pharmacy commodity	150	in all shops
Denaturated spirits, 1 liter		15	
Butter, 1 kg	6:90	60	
Sausage	4:50-9:-	30-50	
Sugar	1:25	15	
Bread	1:-	3-4	
Bun (white bread) (50 grams)	-:11	-.45	
Piece of cake (gateau)	-:40	2.10	
Pork, 1 kg	6:30	20	
Oranges, 1 kg	1-2.30	1:10	imported chiefly from Israel
Lemons	2:60-3:50	more expensive than oranges and in short supply	
Apples, 1 kg	about 2:-	12	
A dinner consisting of: meat balls and potatoes, one bottle of ale	3:40	14 zl. at the railway restaurant in Szczecin	

3. "In September 1953 quantities of rotten cucumbers were thrown away on the Polish coast. Trucks loaded with cucumbers were driven to certain meadows in the coastal area and unloaded. At first the cucumbers had stood about in large barrels in the yards of the food cooperatives. Then they were divided into two parts: those that were rotten all through, were taken away and thrown on meadows in the country; others that could be used somehow, were distributed among canteens subordinated to ZPOG (Zarząd Portu Gdansk-Gdynia), administration of the ports of Gdynia and Gdansk, e.g., the canteens of Basen Węglowy, Kapitanat Portu, Zarząd Portu, etc. The rotten cucumbers distributed to the canteens were packed in barrels. The workers were indignant and said it was a simple thing to preserve cucumbers - any housewife is able to do it - but for the Socialist state it was too difficult a task.
4. "About 75 per cent of all the country inns have been closed down in Poland. At present only a large village will have an inn. The private inns which were allowed to exist in the small villages in the first years of People's Poland have been liquidated and replaced by cooperatives (spółdzielnie spożywców). Actually, most private inns were liquidated in 1947.

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- 3 -
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5. "All cooperative farms are closed on Sundays and holidays. Thus the peasants have nowhere to go to meet each other. People suspect that this was done on purpose. I heard a CP boss say that the farmers had to devote themselves to their work only - that was good enough for them. (Unfortunately I don't know any details about the man; I saw him at the Orbis Restaurant (formerly Grand Hotel) in Łopot in May or June of 1953. When we commented on this remark, a friend told me that the man was a peasant's son himself and had been promoted through 'awans socjalny'.)
6. Cafes
Cafes (Cukiernie) still exist in the towns. On weekdays they are usually empty, at least in such towns as Poznań, Gdansk, Gdynia, Szczecin, etc. However, on Saturdays and Sundays all of them are full to capacity despite the extremely high prices.
7. "A piece of cake (gateau) or a good cake plus a very small cup of coffee costs 25 zł. However, the cakes are good and the coffee is the real thing. A whole gâteau costs 120-150 zł. and is very good - with chocolate, fruit, whipped cream and marzipan. It is possible to order one and take it home, but who is wealthy enough to spend such a sum on a cake, however good.
8. "The people who visit the cafes are 'biurowiści' (office workers), CP functionaries, officers of the UB, WOP and the Army, as well as those members of the intelligentsia (bywalszych ludzi) who have retained their posts in the government and economic apparatus. "The old and the new intelligentsia both go to cafes. Why do people go to the cafes? They look for a little change from the grey monotony that is everyday life in Poland. Besides, the cafes remind one of the good, old times.
9. "Despite everything there are still two privately-owned cafes at Łopot. One of them lies close to the Baltyk cinema on Ulica Rokossowskiego. Earlier the owner had a large cafe but was compelled to 'sell' it to the state, i.e., the cooperative. He also kept a private bakery and candy shop. Now he has only a small-scale bakery which is popularly called the Sweet Hall - 'Słodka Dziurka'. Of course, it is only a question of time when this bakery will be taken over, too.
10. Restaurants - Income of Waiters
"I had a good friend who was a waiter at Nowy Port in Gdansk. This man told me the following about life of the waiters:
(a) The actual income of a waiter is at present [summer 53] 1,500-1,800 zł. monthly. His basic pay is only 700-850 zł. but he makes much more by resorting to various tricks. Thus, the bill is about 20 percent higher than it ought to be, apart from tips. If the bill for a dinner is 100 zł., twenty zł. are added under various headings - 120 zł. is the price of a dinner for four at a first-rate, but not the very best restaurant in Poland. It consists of vegetable soup, cucumber soup or 'zur', meat balls with potatoes and vegetables (e.g., carrots) and the sweet apple jam or fruit compote. The price also includes a couple of bottles of beer. As a rule the customers keep calm although everybody is aware of the practice: they consider that a waiter, too, must live. A more unappetizing trick is to collect the dregs from all wine and vodka glasses and to serve these to customers. Another common practice is for the waiter to have his own bottle of vodka with him. He serves this to the customers in glasses and puts the money in his own pockets. To make his account tally, he writes out duplicate bills where the vodka is not mentioned. Everybody who works at a restaurant uses these tricks, but nobody bothers them because 'they are human beings, too'. It is said that the management has its own manipulations to attend to.

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11. "At all 'evening restaurants' the so-called 'consumer fee' has again been made compulsory, as it was a year ago [1956]. The amount demanded depends on the quality of the restaurant. As a rule it is 30-50 zl. It is almost doubled when some entertainment is offered at the restaurant. The consumer fee (popularly called konsunagej) means that the bill can never be less than that amount.
- Variety Shows
12. "All variety artists are subordinated to the Przedsiębiorstwo Impres Artystycznych 'Artos' which was established a couple of years ago. Its headquarters are in Warsaw, and there are branch offices in all voivodship capitals. Troupes of artists tour the country in accordance with directives received from Artos and under contracts concluded through that agency. As a rule these contracts last one month. When the month is past, the troupes proceed to another town. Criticism of bureaucracy is among the most popular subjects treated in the programmes of such artistic troupes. Usually the programs are called: Song, Humour and Satire (pieśń humor i satyra). I feel, however, that in the last year and a half the proportion of anecdotes and jokes in the program has been considerably cut. As a rule these ensembles of singers and story-tellers perform in civilian clothes. They dress alike - in summer, in grey flannel and blue coats. Couples demonstrating various dances on the dance floor, and dancing acrobats can no longer be seen anywhere in Poland. The orchestra consists of four or five persons, at least one of whom is a US agent who observes the customers as well as his colleagues. Individual members of the orchestra are frequently transferred from one band to another, in order to avoid too close friendships between the musicians. The result is detrimental to the quality of the music, but this does not bother the authorities.
- Barbers and Hairdressers
13. "There are no private barber shops or hairdressers left in Gdansk; all have been turned into cooperatives (spółdzielnie fryzyrskie). Some hairdressers still call on their customers at their homes after hours to give a shave, but this service is rare. The hairdresser-cooperatives often have too many administrative personnel: it can happen that an establishment employing 9-10 hairdressers will have at the same time three or four office workers.
14. "The establishments are clean enough, as a rule. A haircut and shave costs 12-18 zl., depending on the establishment; a certain difference still exists between the various establishments, although they have all been turned into cooperatives. A shave without haircut costs about 3-5 zl. A permanent wave (a hot one, of course, not chemical) costs about 35-50 zl. Other prices for women's work are not known to me. As a rule, about 15-20 per cent is added to every bill as payment for the 'service'.
15. "A razor blade costs 1 zl. The Polish blades are still of a very bad quality. Swedish razor blades are in great demand."

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